

ADDRESS



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MEXICAN VETERANS OF ILLINOIS,

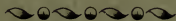
DELIVERED AT

DECATUR, ILL.,

Wednesday, August 16, 1893,

—♦—♦—♦— BY —♦—♦—♦—

»»» HON. J. NICK. PERRIN. »»»



Published Pursuant to Resolution of Mex. Vet. Ass'n of Ill.



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Veterans of the War with Mexico:

FROM the Rio Grande's mouth, where its current murmurs constant greetings to the waters of the Gulf, to where Chihuahua's mountain range is standing on eternal guard above the plains, and down to where in ancient days the palace of the Montezumas stood, the route was marked some six and forty years ago by a victorious march of that great conquering host of which you formed a part, and of which this remnant now is left to point with pride to that unbroken chain of seventy victories won in seventy battles fought upon the field of war. The route was marked by that victorious march which, crowned with triumph in the end, brought another sovereign state into our great domain. And, crowned with triumph in the end, that conquering host of which you formed a part came back now nearly five decades ago to lay away the arms of war and enter in the arts of peace amid a nation's glad acclaim. This remnant of that conquering host that now is left amid the memories of those battles fought and victories won to point with pride back to the halo of their glorious deeds is worthy, too, as much to-day the nation's glad acclaim as in the days when victory brought you home and the nation gladly welcomed your return. Worthy of the nation's glad acclaim because no annals of the world can furnish more to fire the patriot heart than the record spread on history's page of how a hundred thousand heroes fought in order that the nation's honor might not fade and the star of Texas would not pale. Worthy of the world's most thunderous applause because this record is the cleanest page in all the world's great Book of Time. This page has not a blot or stain to mar the general text; no record

of a single battle lost; nor how the foe in triumph left the field; nor yet a hint of cowardice to lend disgrace unto this country's pride. *This page is clean.* Its title reads: "The war with Mexico was not for greed, revenge nor gold." Its context tells of how the struggle was begun; of how a vain, insulting race encroached upon our commerce in the gulf; of how they stole our ships; of how they plundered vessels on the sea; and how, with confiscation's iron hand, they robbed our merchants on their soil. How remonstrance was in vain. How this race had promised all redress. How promises were not redeemed. Redresses never came; aggressions came to take their stead; continued till forbearance ceased; continued till our nation was aroused; and then, when tocsins sounded through the land, how patriots sprang to arms in self-defense. The war with Mexico began in self-defense. In self-defense our soldiers fought for two whole years. And when, at last, its termination came, the victors left no standing guard to place their heels upon a beaten foe, but, having fixed the boundary lines between the parties to the strife, and having given freedom to the Texans from oppression's reign, they turned their steps towards those sacred homes in which the inmates waited their return; towards those states from whence they came; towards the land for which they risked their fortunes and their lives. No wonder, then, that such a host should meet their nation's proud acclaim. They were the heroes of a righteous war. They went with willing hearts and hands and came back when the luster of their deeds was beaming brightly on their heads. In the presence of this remnant listen to a short recital of those deeds that will forever shed their luster on the generations yet to come. Bear with me awhile until within imagination's pale we tramp again from where the famed Nueces formed a hostile line to where at Vera Cruz the shadows of the Orizaba peak are cast upon the bay; from Point Isabel, where operations first began,

to where the operations ceased—within the gates of the ancient capital; from Matamoras in the North to San Antonio in the South; from the prairies, where at Palo Alto victory first was won, to where Chepultepec alone was left to bar the way to win the last great victory of the war; from Resaca de la Palma's deep ravine to where the foe was forced from Cherubusco's heights; from Buena Vista, where the patriots made the anniversary of the day when Washington was born a doubly sacred day, to that great sacred day when Guadeloupe Hidalgo's treaty ended all the strife; from Victoria and Tampico down to Cerro Gordo and Jalapa; from Saltillo down to Pueblo; and from Monterey to Mexico. In your imagination now you tramp again across the tropic vales, where palms and olive trees in great profusion grow; you march across the tablelands, where evergreens and cedars wear their springtime garb the whole year round; you wade the marshes and lagoons amid the heated winds that from the ocean come; and climb the rugged mountain sides until you reach the region of perennial snow. You hear the bugle-call amid the coyote's shriek at night upon the San Fernando's banks; you wake at early dawn at sound of rattling drums and groans of bisons and of bears amid the forests of Tamaulipas; and you march beneath the midday sun to sound of fifes and hiss of scorpions and of snakes to meet the shot and shell of foes and conquer them before that sun goes down to rest. While in the North, on Coahuila's soil, you hear again the mocking-bird, whose song is mingled with the music of your flutes; and in your march along the eastern coast, through marshes and through fens, you time your steps to trumpets blare mixed up with croak of frogs; while in the Sunny South the notes played on your silver horns are softened by the melody of humming-birds, whose gentle whirr melts earth and air into a cadence sweet and wild that well befits the final and victorious act upon the theatre of war. Above it all you hear the groans

of dying foes and shrieks of dying fiends ; you also see a comrade drenched with blood ; you hear the clash of saber strokes and see the smoke arise above the cannon's mouth. The work of death is hovering in the air. Around you hangs the battle's heavy cloud and fog through which the path leads on to victory or the soldier's grave. You hear the rattle of the flint-lock guns and see the bullets rain like hail. You feel the foe give way. You see them fall like blades of grass before the reaper's scythe. You see a host retreat. And, with undaunted nerve, you still pursue. Pursue until the hostile hosts are flying from the field. Flying like the leaves pursued by angry winds. Flying from destruction's awful storm. And, as they flee amid the carnage wild, you hear the yell of conquering hosts and loud huzzahs from victor's throats. And, through the cloud and smoke, you see your old commander at the head and hear the voice of Zachary Taylor at the helm. You see and hear it all. You saw and heard it all some six and forty years ago. And, though your sight be growing dim and your hearing less acute, yet memory grasps within its pale the scenes you witnessed then. This war, like every other war or any great event, did not spring suddenly into being. Every great event is but the slow result of causes long drawn out. Results successively in turn are causes and effects. Results of yesterday are causes of the present hour ; and causes now transpiring at this hour lead on to other ends to-morrow. Thus the war with Mexico was not a sudden burst of passion. The ultimatum came when all the antecedent happenings had been following in the channel from whence, at last, the inevitable flows. For nearly thirty years the fires were smothered. For nearly three decades the logs of discord smouldered. When, from the kiln, there came the finished product, then the conflagration was most rapidly enkindled. After having floundered through the darkness of three centuries under Spanish rule the country known as New Spain, and

afterward as Mexico, awakening from its passive state, began to show signs of revolt. After sixty-four Spanish Viceroy's had occupied the position of Governor over this province, and had imposed that autocratic power upon the natives which eventually drove them into restlessness, at length the spirit of discontent became a spirit of revolt. The standard of revolt was raised in 1810 at Guanajuata by the famous revolutionist, Hidalgo. Although he was defeated and executed, after him came Morelos. He, in turn, was executed. Then came the "Liberator." Iturbide proclaimed the independence of the nation in 1821. But he was only allowed to rule by Spanish recognition. Independence had to be achieved again. And in 1822 Santa Anna proclaimed the Republic at Vera Cruz. Iturbide abdicated; left; returned; was shot in 1824. For the next decade this nation witnessed contested presidencies, the reaction of the church, the abolition of the constitution, and the final consolidation of confederated states in a Mongrel Republic, with Santa Anna as its Mongrel President, though its dictator in power and practice. Texas, which had belonged to Mexico since the Florida and Louisiana purchases, refused to submit. In 1836 she seceded from the Mexican Confederacy, and, under the leadership of as brave a set of men as ever marched to war, she achieved her independence. On the 6th of March the first great blow was struck. A blow that sounded through the world. A blow whose echo yet is sounding through the universe. On that day, behind the walls of the famous Alamo, Colonel Travis and his men waited for that well-remembered combat to the death that sent a shudder round the globe, whilst the world's great heart stood still with awe. The little band was small. A hundred and four score was all they numbered when the roll was called. Travis, Crockett and the Bowies answered to their names without a fear. While answers to the other names were given by men whose voices left no tremors in

their throats or quivers in their frames. An overwhelming force was on the other side. A force whose sweep was bound to storm the walls. The walls *were* stormed. But in that mighty sweep a thousand "greasers" fell before the last brave Texan died. That little band resisted till no one was left, and, when the fight was done, not e'en a single voice could answer to the roll. They all were hushed in death. The patriots slept the sleep of martyrdom. But, while no one was left to call the roll, and while no voice could make response, yet in the air around the place a breath was felt to permeate that breathed and sighed and almost spoke. It whispered in the ears of those whose hands were red with blood; its accents floated on the breeze around those human fiends; and wafted by the winds away, while only echoes staid behind, yet on the San Jacinto's banks in June those accents broke in thunder-tones; and, while Sam Houston's force fell fiercely on the foe, they shouted their avenging cry: *The Alamo*. And with this war-cry on the San Jacinto's banks the Alamo's defenders were avenged. Half the army of the Mexicans were killed. The other half were captured in their flight. Santa Anna, too, was captured in a swamp. That night, while Houston slept, they brought him to his tent. And in the morning, when he begged for life, the generous victor granted his request. But on condition if his life was spared the foe must move from Texas soil and Texas freedom must be guaranteed. T'was thus the "Lone Star State" became an independent member in the world's great sisterhood of states. The martyrs' blood that flowed within the Alamo had thus become the seed from whence a new Republic sprang. And down the corridors of time and through the span of future years the magic password shall forever ring. Wherever freedom's heart shall throb the password's ring will touch its chords; where liberty's great pulse shall beat its beats shall quicken at this ring; and everywhere in every land the patriot's

throat shall find a voice to shout in accents clear and loud
 "The Alamo!"

Texas became a Republic. Was recognized by the United States in 1837, and then by Belgium, France and England. It then had the recognition and sanction of some of the most powerful and most enlightened nations of the globe. While these events were going on Mexico still committed depredations on our trade, although in 1831 she had agreed to cease. Three years after Texas became independent. The United States and Mexican Commissioners met for the purpose of squaring accounts. This was in 1840. By this time their depredations aggregated in the neighborhood of \$6,000,000. Their own Commissioners themselves acknowledged \$2,000,000. Three years later they acknowledged it all, thereby admitting their guilt and piracy. The promise was made to pay in \$300,000 installments. They paid three of these and then refused to pay the balance. This was the situation in 1845. This was the relationship existing when the matter of the annexation of Texas to the United States came up. It was, therefore, not the subsequent annexation alone that produced the Mexican war, but principally the antecedent thefts committed by Mexican pirates on the seas, the refusal to treat and make redress, the consent later to treaty by commissioners, but also its willful violation after it was made. These were the principal causes, and our nation sent its soldiers to the front in self-defense, and even then only after the laws of neutrality were violated by the Mexicans leaving their own territory and crossing the border line into territory not belonging to them.

The delegates in the constitutional convention of Texas approved the resolution of annexation to the United States July 4, 1845. The Mexican Minister left Washington because Congress passed the joint resolution providing for annexation. The Mexican President, Herrera, issued his proclamation of rights and an appeal to arms. It was

then that President Polk ordered Taylor to Texas with a force of 1,500 men, while Commodore Conner sailed for the gulf to protect American interests there. Taylor remained at Corpus Christi all fall and winter. With his "Army of Occupation" he simply protected the disputed territory while lawless bands were preparing for its invasion. In view of these preparations, in January, 1846, the Secretary of War ordered Taylor to the Rio Grande, opposite Matamoras. On the way he stopped at Point Isabel and left some stores and nearly 500 of his men. With the other thousand he went to the Rio Grande and built Fort Brown across from Matamoras. In corroboration of our claim of right may be cited the fact that about this time the Mexican President, Herrera, wanted peace. Of course, this made him unpopular with his nation, and they elected General Paredes in his place and as his successor. Paredes, being a soldier bred to the profession of arms, inaugurated a vigorous campaign. He sent General Ampudia to drive Taylor beyond the Nueces. Ampudia wrote Taylor to withdraw in twenty-four hours. Taylor was not in the business of withdrawing. He sent a prompt refusal and staid. Like that valiant sentry who 1,800 years ago went to death amid the pumice-stones and ashes from old Mt. Vesuvius in that terrible eruption, when at the gates of Pompeii he staid within his sentry-box until he fell upon the spot whereon his captain placed him, Zachary Taylor, too, determined that a death with honor was far better than ignoble yielding, and hence he staid upon the spot whereon his country placed him. Ampudia wavered in the face of his determined answer. Then they changed commanders. Arista came to cut off communication between Taylor and his stores. The Mexicans crossed the Rio Grande above Taylor's encampment, and this violation of the boundary line, this invasion was in itself sufficient cause for war. They captured some of Captain Thornton's dragoons and killed sixteen of his

men. That, too, was another hostile act which justified the war. From that time the patriots pushed the fighting all along the line. It was victory everywhere. Palo Alto's prairies saw a bloody fight upon the 8th of May, when 600 Mexicans were killed; and on the evening of the 9th, while coming through a deep ravine, they met again Arista and some 7,000 men, but when Resaca de la Palma's smoke had cleared away another 1,000 Mexicans were dead upon the field. Then the fort across from Matamoros on the Rio Grande was saved. For seven days the little fort had nobly stood the fire until the army to its rescue came. While thus the victors onward pushed the news spread back to all the states. Amid the great excitement of the times the Congress voted \$10,000,000 to the further prosecution of the war, while 50,000 boys and men came forward as the nation's volunteers. Then on to further victories they pushed. Taylor, Wool and Worth gained battle after battle in the North. Monterey, Saltillo, Victoria, Tampico, Buena Vista and a score of other names shall ever make the nation's great triumphal arch a record of the deeds of loyal sons. While these events were passing in the North the "Army of the West" was crossing o'er the plains from Leavenworth to Sante Fé. When Kearney and Frémont joined forces in the West, New Mexico and California fell almost without a blow. But way off in the South, as if the tropic heat were not already too intense, the heat of battle raged with all its vehemence. The march of Scott from Vera Cruz to Mexico was like the mowing of a human swath with the keen-edged scythe of death. The castle of San Juan D'Ulloa gave up 5,000 men. At Cerro Gordo Santa Anna lost a third his men. The victors took Jalapa and the castle of Peroté next. Puebla fell without a stroke, and then the way was clear to strike the very heart. Around the seat of government the scene was one great theater of camps. But heights and forts bowed down before the

mighty onward rush of conquering hosts, and walls went crumbling into dust beneath the tread of conquering giants' feet. As rapidly as shifting views within kaleidoscopes the views around this spot were changed. Contreras fell; and San Antonio yielded then. The heights of Cherubusco then were climbed. El Molinos del Rey was next to yield, and then the hill of old Chapultepec alone was left to guard the gates; but its frowning battlements could not resist the sweep, and on its shattered ruins was placed our nation's flag as in triumphant march the victors entered Mexico. This ended then the strife. That strife in which the armies of the Center and the West and North lent loyal aid unto each other's cause. That strife in which a hundred thousand heroes took a part. That strife in which this remnant took a part and faced the foe upon the field of death. On this reunion day our hearts must swell in praise as we recall that bravery on those fields. On each recurring year our hearts will swell in praise, but each recurring year, alas! leaves fewer hearts to swell. On each recurring year your ranks are thinned and comrades that you met the year before have closed their eye-lids down in sleep. But, while these years thus come and go, let me entreat this remnant now that while in waiting for your turn do not forget your bravery on the field in Mexico, and when the foe of death shall come, with resolution firm as six and forty years ago, look on his face without a fear. The soldier hero in his youth will never falter in his age, nor waver at the end. And at the call of that eternal roll a hundred thousand joyful voices will respond.